

2003

20. Friends of the National Museum Singapore 25th Anniversary 1978-2003 [all pages]

Friends of the Museum

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THE FRIENDS
OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM
SINGAPORE

25th Anniversary

1978 - 2003





"Friends cherish each other's hopes. They are kind to each other's dreams."

- Henry David Thoreau



Foreword from the Chairman



In 1978, four art-loving and public spirited women got together to form the Friends of the National Museum. They wanted to assist the then National Museum with museum guides and children's educational programmes.

Twenty-five years later, that fledgling organisation has become a mini United Nations, with 1,300 members from over forty countries. Over three hundred members regularly volunteer their time and expertise as guides in our museums and institutions and by helping out with our outreach activities. I have often taken foreign visitors to our museums and have admired the charming and knowledgeable manner in which the docents have taken us around the exhibitions. They have always succeeded in making our visits more enjoyable and more informative.

The success of FOM has been due to good leadership, the enthusiasm of its members, their shared love of art and heritage and their willingness to share their knowledge and enthusiasm with others. FOM has also been very open to change and has responded splendidly to the many changes of the last ten years. When the National Museum evolved into three museums, FOM readily agreed to provide training and volunteers for the two new museums, Singapore Art Museum (1996) and the Asian Civilisations Museum (1997). FOM also agreed to work with the National Archives of Singapore and the Heritage Conservation Centre. More recently, it took 'Reflections at Bukit Chandu', a

World War Two interpretative centre, under its wings. When the new Asian Civilisations Museum, in Empress Place, was opened this year, a team of docents and volunteers was ready and eager to take on the challenge of guiding and helping out in the largest museum in Singapore.

I understand that FOM will take the bold step of registering as a society by the end of 2003. I salute you for yet another strategic move to respond to changes and to give your members a greater sense of ownership and legitimacy. FOM is a paradigm case of a non-governmental organisation. Its success is not only good for NHB but also for Singapore. The reason is that the new Singapore needs a vibrant civil society.

The National Heritage Board is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year. It is a year of double celebration because FOM is celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary. I am confident that NHB and FOM will forge an even closer and richer relationship in the years ahead.

My congratulations to the president and the members of FOM for their many achievements during the past twenty-five years and my best wishes for many more achievements in the years ahead.

Professor Tommy Koh, Chairman, National Heritage Board

Message from the President



Taking on the role of president of the Friends of the National Museum, Singapore is both a challenge and a great honour, especially when I look back at the impressive roll call of previous coordinators and presidents over our twenty-five year history. Each has contributed a tremendous amount to help shape FOM into the organisation it is today - active, diverse, open and welcoming of new people and ideas.

We pride ourselves on the many opportunities we offer our members which expand their knowledge and understanding of Asia, both Singaporeans and the many other nationalities living here. Members learn from our lecture series, which is often the first contact with our organisation, right through to our volunteer guides (docents) and those who support them with training and research.

Our goal is to provide life-long learning and a greater appreciation of the history, culture and arts of the region. By doing this, we believe we also contribute to Singapore's quest to deepen awareness of, and interest in, its heritage and culture. As Lim Siam Kim, former Chief Executive Officer of the National Heritage Board, speaking about our contribution to NHB put it, "FOM provides an avenue for those who love heritage and also an avenue for volunteerism."

So what are our future goals? Whilst we will continue to pride ourselves on our ability to respond quickly to new opportunities for our 1,300 members representing over forty nationalities, we also have to ensure our foundations are secure. Thus one of our key goals for this year is the registration of our organisation.

We also wish to ensure that we attract an increasing number of Singaporeans from all walks of life so we are committed to assisting with school and outreach programmes.

Absolutely none of this would be possible without the dedication of our volunteers - whether they are museum docents, Children's Discovery Gallery guides, members who serve on one of the many committees which plan and run our wide range of activities or those who help with the many other functions which ensure our organisation runs smoothly and professionally. I would like to applaud their energy, enthusiasm and sheer hard work. Thank you - it is a pleasure to work with all of you.

I give a special thanks to the team which has worked so hard to make this book possible and express my grateful appreciation to the sponsors, Allied Pickfords, American Express, DBS Bank, Michael and Shelly Dee, Energiser, General Motors, Interdean Interconex International Movers, the Iyer family and Walt Disney Television.

I would like to dedicate this twenty-fifth anniversary book of the Friends of the National Museum, Singapore to all our members - past, present and future.

Jane Iyer, President, Friends of the National Museum, Singapore

FOM Coordinators & Presidents

Oct 1978 - Dec 1979
 Dec 1979 - Nov 1980
 Nov 1980 - Dec 1981
 1982
 1983
 1984
 1985
 1986
 1987
 Jan - Jul 1988
 Aug 1988 - Dec 1989
 1990
 1991

Judy Breslar and Susan Ingraham
 Elizabeth Franco and Boruna Peerbhoy
 Boruna Peerbhoy and Nancy Kidney
 Nancy Kidney
 Maura Rinaldi
 Nancy Hawes
 Genny Grinsted
 Gladys Andraca
 Julia Oh
 Aune Garcia
 Sue Sismondo
 Pamela Yearsley
 Irene Tan

1992
 1993
 1994
 1995
 1996
 1997
 Jan - Jun 1998
 Jul 1998 - Sep 1999
 Oct 1999 - Sep 2000
 Oct 2000 - Sep 2001
 Oct 2001 - Sep 2002
 Oct 2002 - May 2003
 Jun 2003 -

Roda Ahluwalia
 Sally Ward
 Shaha Parpia
 Nancy LeBaron
 Jean Miller
 June Davey
 Beba Hamati
 Kay Anand-Sobti
 Margaret White
 Holly Nash
 Brooks Goodyear
 Cecilia Carpay
 Jane Iyer

Inaugural Meeting

9 Oct 78

Dear Friend,

A group of interested and interesting people, under the leadership of Mrs Wynne Spiegel, a member of the Museum Friends in Portland, Oregon, USA, have gathered together to form The National Museum Volunteers' Group

2 This is an informal group. Its objectives are:

(a) to assist the citizens of Singapore more fully to appreciate and enjoy the treasures of the National Museum, and

(b) to stimulate the community interest in the activities of the National Museum.

3 Members of the Friends of the National Museum Volunteers' Group are encouraged to broaden their appreciation and understanding of the history and cultural heritage and arts of this region we live in and of those of countries outside Southeast Asia, and to assist voluntarily.

4 In order to help the Friends of the Group to be of service to the public, we provide our Friends and their families, who wish to further their interest in the history and arts, with a wide range of cultural and social activities by conducting informal study and discussion groups, arranging lectures by distinguished speakers in many fields of artistic and cultural endeavour and special art film programmes.

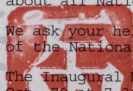

5 By being a Friend, you can support your National Museum directly and indirectly, as well as adding to your knowledge in a warm and friendly atmosphere. You will get a chance to meet friends and will receive a regular newsletter containing information about all National Museum exhibitions and activities.

6 We ask your help and encouragement in forming an evening group of the National Museum Volunteers.

7 The Inaugural Meeting of this group will be held on Friday, 20 Oct, 78 at 7.30 pm at the National Museum for founder members. You are cordially invited to become a member of the National Museum of Volunteers.


8 We look forward to your support and your attendance is greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

 
MAYN KONG THE FRIENDS
OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM
SINGAPORE

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"A volunteer is someone who of her/his own free will engages in good work which is of benefit to the community, without financial gain. As NVC's mission is to promote volunteerism across the community, the Friends of the National Museum is an important demonstration of volunteerism outside the social services. Its members have raised the bar for volunteerism in Singapore, especially with their docent training which has all the elements of good volunteer management. This is admirable. I am proud to attach the label of 'professionalism' to FOM, for it provides a good model for other volunteering organisations to study."

- Tan Chee Koon, Executive Director, National Volunteer Centre

Volunteers, Take a Bow

Nearly thirty-three percent of our members volunteer their time and skills to the Friends of the National Museum.



Any organisation would be proud to enter its twenty-fifth year with nearly 1,300 members, representing most nationalities in Singapore today, and a bank balance in the black. The fact that we achieve this with no paid officers through the efforts of busy Singaporeans, newcomers to a strange land and old Singapore hands is a marvel. How does this diverse group of people manage to work so well together? Where do they find the professional attitude and dedication? After all they are just volunteers!

But what is a volunteer? It's not, as some might say, someone with too much time on their hands. Rather it is someone who is generous enough to offer his/her knowledge and know-how for free. Many of our active volunteers are professionals in their own fields; many work full-time or part-time and have families and other commitments whose demands have to be balanced against those of the Friends of the National Museum.

It is no mean feat for people who may not know each other well, or at all, to balance their personal commitments and work both independently and together as a team. Whatever is required, our members seem able to do. Until 2002 FOM had no place to call home but within six months of gaining space in Armenian Street we had a well run office and a dozen FOM members had volunteered to man it. As a group professionalism is our benchmark, with the organisation continually attracting new members who enable our ambitious plans to happen!



Many people are actively involved in arranging numerous activities which are enjoyed by the community at large, FOM members, their partners and their families. Some programmes, such as our lectures, children's museum projects and docent-led tours, are highly visible and are the basis of our high public standing in Singapore's cultural circles. Working

Celebrating 25 Years of Volunteering for the Community 1978 1978 1978 1978 1978 1978 1978 1978 1978

1978

- Four individuals headed by Wynne Spiegel establish the Friends of the National Museum, Singapore
- Inaugural meeting of the National Museum volunteers' group: Friday 20 October
- Introduction of
 - Four study groups
 - Research group
 - Discussion group
 - First newsletter

- First student workshop
- Christmas Tree Decorations workshop for children
- Volunteers translate 'Folk Theatre' book from Dutch to English
- Advertisement appears for "Camerawoman to snap Wednesday speakers"
- 'Real Cool' project set up (sewing of shawls for members to wear in the 'cool' film room - lecture venue!)
- Membership within three months: 100



quietly elsewhere are our study groups (which are a resource for our public lectures), our library volunteers and our book discussion groups (rich sources of new information). In addition, there are other activities such as members' programmes and study tours as well as all the administrative functions which enable us to record, finance, implement and publicise our organisation. Our success is the sum of all of these parts.



Our volunteers get together sometimes once a week and sometimes only once or twice a year, meeting at the museums, in our library and offices, in each others' homes and at cafes and restaurants across Singapore. Some functions can be handled by one person but other groups have many members, enabling them to share the many tasks and schedule them to fit holidays, work and other activities.

So why do we volunteer? Here's what some of our members have to say.

PROFESSIONAL SATISFACTION

"Each month I enjoy the creative challenge of laying out the articles, finding the graphics, checking the content and finishing by the deadline. I enjoy working with both FOM Steering committee members and NHB staff as we prepare each issue. As I work on the newsletter I learn a lot about FOM, the museums, Southeast Asia and publishing along the way."

"It is rewarding to see a full lecture theatre and new faces at Monday morning or Friday evening lectures or new members sign up for the

docent training programme which also means that the publicity we send out to newspapers and magazines is being well received."

"FOM has a unique collection of resources on Asia, with emphasis on the Southeast Asian region, in its library. It is a privilege to be custodians of this resource, to build and maintain it and to make it available to our members. It is a tangible asset that reflects the work of FOM since its inception and, as such, the collection should be updated to match the changing needs of our membership."

MAKING FRIENDS

"Members' programmes offer the chance to discover interesting cultural treasures and riches in a much more interactive way. To see twenty or so enthusiastic people at the end of each programme is very rewarding. It's a great way to meet people, both foreign and local, by putting joint effort into subjects that appeal to us."



"I well remember my first few Monday morning lectures as a total stranger to Singapore and to FOM. It seemed to me that everyone knew everyone and I knew no one! The welcoming ladies made me feel so welcome each time I went to a Monday morning lecture that I soon felt at home. I am pleased to wear my welcoming badge of office and I hope that if you are in need of a friend, you will come to talk to us at the welcoming table, before you know it you will be one of us!"

1979

- Public lecture series initiated
- Short study tours initiated
- Docent group established



- First *Holiday Creative* workshop for children
- First educational article appears in the newsletter: 'Peranakans'
- Book and slide library established in home of member

HAVING FUN

"I would say that the reason our volunteers join the Children's Discovery Gallery is that they want to work with children - they enjoy the more flexible guiding routine. There is no long training course, it is quite 'hands on' with different games and crafts to participate in. It is a fun and relaxed environment where the volunteers can learn a lot about the history and culture of Singapore from both the content of the various exhibitions and the children themselves."



NEW CHALLENGES

"You get to know so many interesting people, especially the guest speakers, at Monday morning lectures and there is the satisfaction of seeing a nervous first-time speaker keep polishing her talk and then 'dazzle' on a Monday morning. It is nice to know that you are able to encourage and give confidence. I also like the challenge of putting together a schedule of talks that will appeal to our membership whose interests are so diverse."

THE MUSEUMS

"Organising the Friday evening lectures is an excellent job for somebody like me who has regular daytime work, but still wants to do some organising for FOM. I enjoy the lectures themselves and working with the Singapore Art Museum curators."

"One of the nice benefits of the docent programme is the number of interesting and intelligent people you meet and make friends with. I love the

Asian Civilisations Museum which has some wonderful exhibits, both permanent and special, and I like getting the inside scoop on what the exhibits are all about."

SETTLING IN

"I'd heard about docent training as a very good programme and as an excellent way to immerse myself in my new surroundings right away. I wanted to learn about my new home and the history of the area in which I was now living and I wanted to do something for the community. I would definitely recommend the training and guiding to people who are looking for an added dimension to their stay in Singapore. It helped me feel that Singapore is truly my home for however long we are here."

SHARING LEARNING

"I love public speaking and get a kick out of teaching people new things."

"I enjoy having the opportunity to have intelligent discussions about books I've read. So many times I read books that I want to discuss and don't know anyone else who's read them. The people in my group are all thoughtful and provide valuable perspectives and insights, even when I don't agree with them."

"I get introduced to authors and titles I would not have known or read. I also learn about different aspects of Asian cultures - be it a piece of history, traditions, contemporary or past lives and various issues faced by these countries. I discover different descriptions, styles, views and opinions on these countries. I like to discuss and share my readings with people from different nationalities and backgrounds."



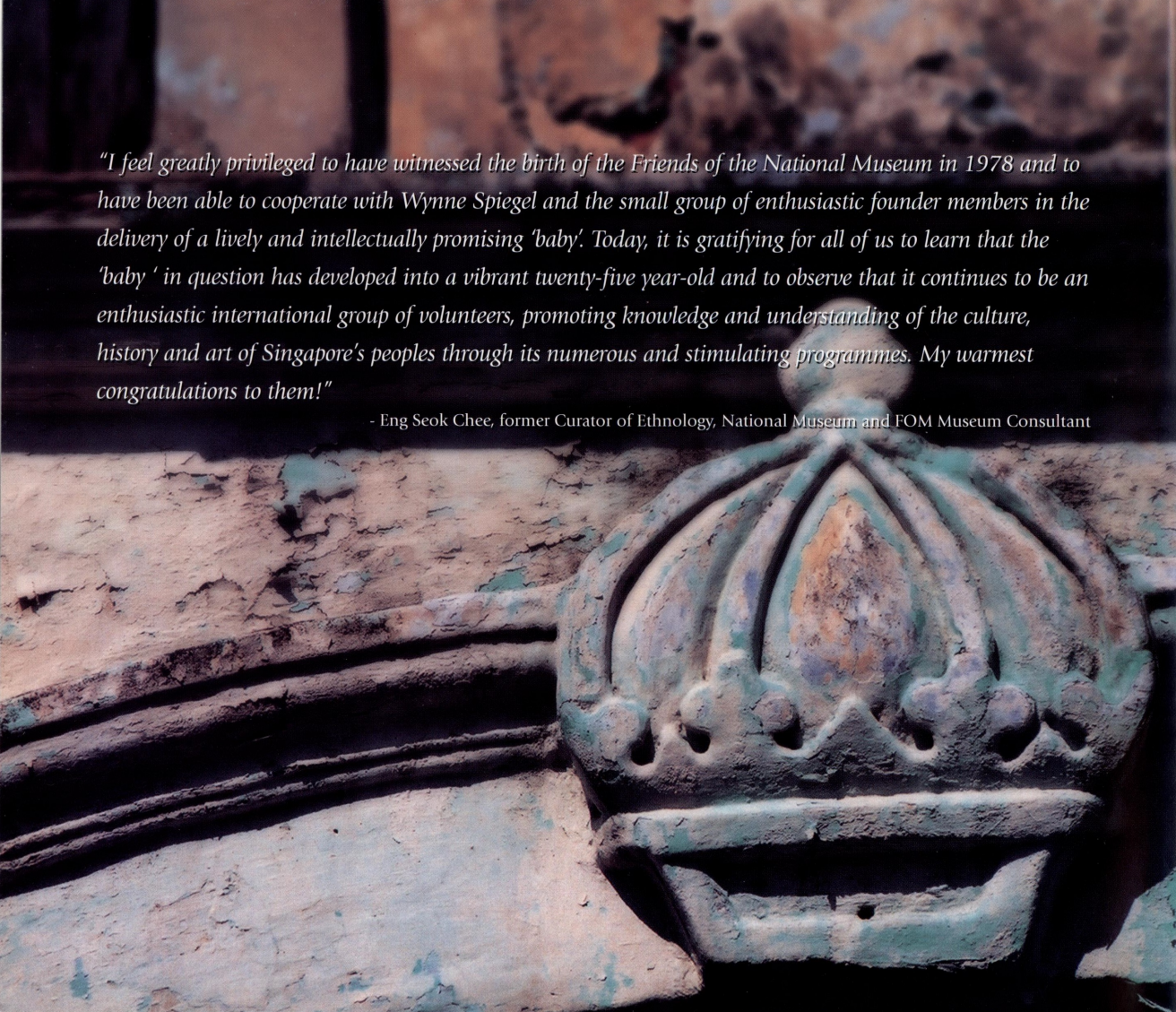
1980

- First docent training programme
- First public tours of the National Museum - Tuesdays
- First evening lecture

- Newsletter published monthly
- *Story Telling* series for children introduced

"I feel greatly privileged to have witnessed the birth of the Friends of the National Museum in 1978 and to have been able to cooperate with Wynne Spiegel and the small group of enthusiastic founder members in the delivery of a lively and intellectually promising 'baby'. Today, it is gratifying for all of us to learn that the 'baby' in question has developed into a vibrant twenty-five year-old and to observe that it continues to be an enthusiastic international group of volunteers, promoting knowledge and understanding of the culture, history and art of Singapore's peoples through its numerous and stimulating programmes. My warmest congratulations to them!"

- Eng Seok Chee, former Curator of Ethnology, National Museum and FOM Museum Consultant



Shared *Vision*, United *Passion*

The Asian Essence - this, of course, means different things to different people. Its elusive spirit, however, has fascinated members of the Friends of the National Museum so much that many of us happily devote our days to seeking, understanding and relishing this new-found centre of our world. Study groups and study tours, docent guiding, special and members' programmes, morning and evening lectures ... such is the line-up of enriching and most agreeable events that mark our calendars. But this was not always so.

The seeds of our support group were planted in 1978 ... through a shared vision. FOM records show that a key figure in the formation of the National Museum volunteers' group, our forerunner, was Wynne Spiegel. She led three other 'interested and interesting people' to kick off the project. By the time she left Singapore for her home in Portland, Oregon, in the United States, only three months following her arrival here, there was an impressive list of over a hundred volunteers for the then National Museum.

October of 1978 was a momentous month. The inaugural meeting was held at the museum on the evening of the twentieth, a Friday. That month also saw the first issue of the group's newsletter - mailed to members for a 'donation' of five dollars a year.

The group's focus, applicable still, was on broadening members' understanding of Asian arts, customs and cultures and helping the museum promote public appreciation of those areas. Study groups were the major forum through which members honed their knowledge. Indeed, the study group concept has been a catalyst, or at least the inspiration, for many other programmes since.



1981

- Japanese docent group formed
- Short study tours (half-day or day) initiated within Singapore and Malaysia
- Introduction of daily museum tours (Monday - Friday)

- Wednesday morning lectures series commences
- Evening lecture series commences

Study groups were a hit from the start. Many people new to Singapore, with time on their hands, found something meaningful to connect with, recall both Sue Williams and Sue Hixson. Rather than merely skimming the surface of the Asian cauldron with events organised by foreign associations that related more to the social than the cultural, they chose to plunge into the rich and complex Asian heritage - whilst on Asian terrain - with like-minded people of different nationalities.



Participants in study groups are often asked to speak at our public lectures. Lecture speakers may also come from our book discussion groups, where the focus is always on Asia. Book group members meet monthly to review and discuss a chosen book. In FOM tradition, guest speakers are also invited from authorities in arts and culture. The late Lee Chin Koon, mother of Singapore's then Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, shared nostalgic reflections of her world of the Nonya-Baba one Wednesday morning nearly twenty-five years ago.

Each participant in a study group does meticulous research on one aspect of the main topic that the particular group is focused on. With up to twenty members in each group, everyone takes a turn in making a forty-five to sixty minutes' presentation during the weekly meetings on the topic he or she has chosen to study. Presentations are given with the aid of slide projectors (or more recently in PowerPoint). Apart from gaining in-depth knowledge of their own topic, participants receive additional insights through the presentations of others and through the discussions that follow.

Both Sue Williams and Sue Hixson assert that, because of different perspectives, even popular topics lend themselves to repeated presentations without any compromise on the contents. Knowledge gleaned becomes more in-depth and study group participants can contribute their extensive knowledge to subsequent FOM programmes.

The morning lectures have always been highly successful, one of the organising members says, recalling the old jam-packed Singapore History Museum theatre. In the 1990s, evening lectures were introduced into members' homes to broaden the reach to spouses and to others in the organisation who could not attend during the work day. The reach has since been further extended to all members of the public, with weekly morning and monthly evening lectures taking place in the museums.

For several members, authorship of books is a gratifying way of channelling acquired facts into tangible form. Studies and lectures on the author Joseph Conrad ignited the interest of one committed FOM member. First intrigued by the fact that a character mentioned by Conrad was laid to rest in Bidadari cemetery, Sue Williams has spent sweltering afternoons exploring the site as research for a book project.

1982

- Regular Japanese tours introduced: Thursday afternoons
- Daily guided tours of the National Museum - maximum number of visitors per tour: ten
- Study tour to China

- FOM gifts 19th century sedan chair to the National Museum
- First Friends of the National Museum logo designed

The title will no doubt make its way to our library, the way a definitive tome on Kraak porcelain has. This last being written by FOM member Maura Rinaldi who began with no knowledge on the subject but, after being persuaded to pursue it in her study group, found herself captivated.

The books authored by our members sit proudly among the mostly-donated collection of about 1,770 tomes in our library. The outline presentations and lists of bibliographies of individual study group members are also there on file for others' reference. Accessible are journals and magazines on Asian arts as well as catalogued newspaper and magazine clippings which add to the resources available. The library's location through the years has been interesting: from members' homes, to a cramped room upstairs in the old National Museum building, then to a freight container parked behind the National Library and finally to its present restful space in Armenian Street.

One facet of FOM that museum visitors first encounter are our teams of docents. Our docent training programmes are intensive courses for trainees, some of whom have already cut their teeth on study groups. They learn a voluminous amount of facts to earn their wings as docents - knowledgeable and skilled guides. Study groups remain a source for information on the museum collections that the docents guide. With the opening of the Asian Civilisations Museum Empress Place

in 2003, along with dynamically changing exhibitions in the Singapore Art Museum, the scope of training and guiding has taken on a challenging dimension.

Study tours, an antithesis of commercial sightseeing trips, are yet another logical extension of the study group concept. One member, who has joined over twenty tours in the twenty-three years she has resided here, notes that the prior research expected of each tour participant helps them to better appreciate the history and culture of their itineraries. On a lighter note, the seventeen or so members of a tour get some more vicarious travel thrown in - accounts of one another's far-flung homelands and interesting vacation spots.

Where public education is concerned ... FOM gets them young! Having children learn about Southeast Asian music and dance, customs and ceremonies, myths, legends and traditional games is only a part of the body of work for the volunteers at the Children's Discovery Gallery. We were instrumental in introducing an interactive and hands-on style of communicating with young people to the museums and on one occasion roped in artists for a series of fun workshops for disabled children.

Today, the Friends of the National Museum, a multicultural group of individuals with diverse backgrounds, are as united in our passion for public service, multi-national camaraderie and enrichment of self through our thirst for the Asian essence as we were when we were first inspired by our shared vision twenty-five years ago.



1983

- Volunteers commence cataloguing artefacts within National Museum
- Introduction of
 - Movie mornings
 - Newcomers' study groups
 - Photography committee
- Regional Friends exchange newsletters

- First FOM brochure published
- Introduction of Saturday tours of National Museum
- 4,500 children visit new Discovery Gallery within four months of opening
- Membership: 400
- Library moves to room in National Library

The ACM Cat

In memory of the cat that adopted this building
and became the museum's mascot, 1998-1999

"To be entrusted with the mission of guiding tourists, casual visitors and, most importantly, Singapore students around the Singapore Art Museum buildings and the artworks that are displayed has been a privilege which at the same time carries a heavy responsibility. This mandate has kept me focused during my years of guiding at SAM and given me such a wonderful opportunity for investigating, studying, researching, learning and hopefully imparting the knowledge I have gained through this process."

- Maureen Hellspong, SAM docent for eight years



Interest, *Commitment* and Enthusiasm



The start of a new docent training course is always fresh and exciting both for the eager participants and for those who are there to share their experiences and knowledge. For everyone who wants to be immersed in the community, who has a thirst for more knowledge of the region's history, culture and the arts, who enjoys meeting people and helping them to appreciate Singapore and beyond, the Friends of the National Museum's docent programme is a must-do.

An effective docent has always been much more than just a good museum guide. Assuredly our docents do draw visitors' attention to some representative objects and give a very clear understanding of what

a particular exhibition is trying to portray. More than this, however, they are an invaluable part of the museum experience.

The docents' eagerness to refresh, expand on and share their knowledge has contributed to the growing visitor interest in Singapore's museums - students, the local community and the numerous tourists. As the museums have extended their scope and reinforced their presence in the community so has our docent group expanded to meet their needs, from just eleven volunteer guides in 1979 to one hundred and fifteen newly-trained docents for the Singapore Art Museum and Asian Civilisations Museum in 2002 being added to our existing ranks of experienced docents.

The requirements for a docent in 2003 have been aptly summed up as ICE: Interest, Commitment and Enthusiasm. These traits are not so very far removed from Merle Quie's advertisement in the January 1979 newsletter for people seeking a "continuing challenge and opportunity for community service and for sharing one's sense of discovery"! Merle went on to say that recruits would "help each other to refresh and increase their knowledge, working together in constant exchanges of experience. This is all done in a spirit of friendliness and helpfulness. We do not consider ourselves 'pros' but are learning all the time."



1984

- Volunteers design and create first 'Study kits' to be distributed to local schools
- FOM participates in National Museum special project, *Pageant of Asian Costumes*
- Article in newsletter states "Membership is now fully computerised!"

- Volunteers catalogue National Museum's collections of Buddhas, laquerware, ceramics and furniture (two-year project)
- Friday morning lecture series introduced in addition to Wednesday mornings: three per week
- FOM sponsors art exhibition, *A New Generation of Singapore Artists*
- Membership: **550**
- Library relocates to home of member

DOCENTS OF YESTERYEAR

From the very start FOM members have been expected to volunteer their time in the service of the museum. In November 1978 a committee of ten, headed by Merle Quie, began researching different items in the museum collection as the beginning of a docent programme. Even at this early stage the group gave informal tours, for example to a group of schoolchildren and mothers at the request of the American Embassy.



Each volunteer studied a different subject and within three months had completed the research and condensed it into 'two to three minutes' talks' which were combined to form a one-hour tour. The new museum volunteers then held ten training sessions with handouts on basic background knowledge of the museum and its contents for potential guides. Afterwards the guides met once a week to discuss exhibits, their tours and to continue to build their knowledge.

One of the pioneer docents (and current FOM advisor), Pheng Tan, recalls: "We were mostly a non-local group and we worked closely with the curators in setting up some exhibits such as one on Peranakans. Trainees often had a special interest in museums, the arts or crafts and this drew them in. Some also had previous experience of guiding in museums in the region. All our actual training was done in the museum so we could see the exhibits as we discussed them. We would be presented with a sheath of notes to learn rather than preparing our own talk."

Once organised, the newly-minted docents took other FOM members on the first museum tour on the fourteenth of March 1979.

In October 1980, Merle Quie, then the first docent group coordinator on the Steering committee, announced in the newsletter that the docents were ready to offer guided tours in English in the National Museum every Tuesday from eleven in the morning to twelve noon. Each tour was limited to ten people and open to all.

This first docent group of eleven met every Tuesday for further training and practice sessions and their weekly guided tours were said to be "well received and increasingly popular", leading to a renewed request for more guides as it is our "eventual aim to offer daily tours plus meet every request for special tours."

In September 1981, the docents developed a new six-month training programme to allow participants ample opportunity to familiarise themselves with the museum exhibits - the first of our well organised and comprehensive training programmes. Group discussions and written question and answer sessions formed part of a weekly training seminar and extra time on research at the museum was expected.

During that year we increased our tours to twice a week and continued through the holiday months of June, July and August and by November were offering daily guided tours, except for weekends and public holidays - no small feat with scarcely a dozen guides. Fortunately in March 1982, fourteen docents completed the first formal training programme. The following year sixteen docents graduated and we have never looked back.



1985

National Museum officially reopens following renovation work

- Volunteers participate in research project for *Architectural Heritage* exhibition
- Lectures every Friday morning repeated back-to-back
- Regular docent tours increase: Tuesday - Friday mornings plus Tuesday and Saturday afternoons

- Friends of the National Museum, Singapore welcomed into the World Federation of Friends of Museums
- Membership: **600**
- Vertical files (cuttings, etc.) introduced into library

DOCENTS OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The foundations of training and guiding were built and FOM's commitment to the National Heritage Board has grown over the years. Not only do we organise tours on a daily basis, including weekends, but we train over a hundred new guides on a yearly basis through intensive courses which are updated to include new museum trends and the subsequent knowledge required. The opening of the Asian Civilisations Museum Empress Place in 2003 was a much-awaited and exciting development which required a considerable investment in new training and research - as indeed had the opening of the Singapore Art Museum in 1996 and Asian Civilisations Museum Armenian Street in 1997.



In our twenty-fifth anniversary year we are proud to have an English-speaking docent force which is two hundred-strong who, along with our Japanese docents, guide a thousand visitors and four hundred and fifty students each month. Besides English and Japanese, our multi-lingual docents provide tours in many other languages on request, notably Mandarin but also other European and Asian languages.

There has been almost a revolution in the make-up of our docent group, reflecting greater interest among Singaporeans in their heritage and also for some perhaps greater confidence in their use of English. Of our most recent new docent graduates, fifty percent are Singaporean.

Today's intensive training involves special course lectures presented by experts from within the community who generously give their time and expertise

voluntarily. In addition our public lectures, group field trips, library research, the practice of guiding skills and the preparation of gallery talks all support the training programme. Each trainee prepares his/her own one-hour tour paper for the relevant museum and, after it has been reviewed by experienced docents, uses it to give their first tour to 'real' visitors - a daunting task for most but a wonderful achievement once successfully completed. The trainees are supported all the way through by experienced docent mentors who ensure that they are provided with all the knowledge and skills they need to graduate as guides who can feel proud and excited to be part of the docent team.

Docent learning does not stop there - it is continually refreshed with information, walkthroughs in the relevant museums, discussion groups and brain-storming sessions - all related to new exhibitions. Ongoing training will be introduced for experienced docents in 2004 to ensure that this dynamic team is provided with the support to develop further knowledge and skills relevant to the exciting movements within Singapore's museums and the cultural and art world at large.



Lim Siam Kim, former National Heritage Board Chief Executive Officer, sums up the valuable contribution made by our docents. "For the visitor who is not very informed on the subject, a guided tour by a good docent will be a very important and impressive part of a museum visit. A docent is a human face to the static exhibition. He/she is passionate ... must believe in the cause and also feel their contribution has meaning."


1986 1986 1986 1986 1986 1986 1986 1986 1986 1986 1986 1986 1986 1986 1986 1986 1986 1986 1986 1986

1986



- Free admission to National Museum granted to FOM members
- Advisory committee reorganised as body of past coordinators and presidents separate from the Steering committee

- First local television coverage of FOM contributions to the museum and activities
- First introductory lecture series for newcomers
- Discovery Room attracts 200 children per week
- Library returns to the National Museum



"There are two ways to introduce our culture. One is for us and the participants to experience things in Japanese daily life such as cooking, dancing, etc. together. The other way is to show our culture through tea ceremony demonstrations. I am glad to promote friendship through these events even though we may not always communicate perfectly with each other. When I see participants are interested in our culture with respect, I always feel that we should treasure our traditions."

- Akiko Shiraishi, Japanese docent for seventeen years

Cultural Exchange in Japanese

Singapore is recognised as one of the most popular destinations for Japanese tourists as well as one of the biggest Japanese business centres in the world. According to the Singapore Tourism Board, over 720,000 visitors came to Singapore from Japan in 2002, accounting for about ten per cent of all visitors to the country, and the Japanese embassy 2002 survey records over 20,000 Japanese living in Singapore.

Japanese docents within the Friends of the National Museum support the National Heritage Board by introducing Japanese visitors and residents to the heritage of Singapore through guided tours in the museums in Japanese. We differ from the English-speaking docents in that all members of our group are culturally the same and we also support the activities of both NHB and FOM by organising and hosting cultural programmes for other FOM members and for the Singapore community.

A great deal of effort goes into the planning of cultural exchange events which have been held twice a year since 1990. These popular Japanese



Fairs introduce others to the customs and life of the Japanese. Recently, a festival focusing on Soybeans featured both cooking and craft workshops using soybeans with lots of enjoyable hands-on experiences. Soybeans are an extremely common food source in Japan and we introduced our guests to many different soybean dishes such as Inarizushi, a kind of sushi in a sack of fried tofu called Aburaage.

To increase the number of visitors for Japanese-guided tours at the Asian Civilisations Museum, NHB suggested that we organise a Japanese workshop or festival at ACM both to introduce our culture to people in Singapore and to promote ACM to Japanese-speaking people. Programmes for this special workshop, held with the help of the Japanese Association in June 2000, included a drums demonstration, a Koto (Japanese harp) mini concert and a traditional tea ceremony.



1987

- National Museum celebrates 100th anniversary
- Volunteers research and write gallery guides for National Museum
- FOM funds and implements *Things Japanese* exhibition
- FOM researches and produces 'Kraak Porcelain' video
- First workshop for disabled children, *The Temperamental Artist*: 100 attend

- Participation in intra-Asian archaeological excavation workshop: Fort Canning
- Six 'Volunteer' awards presented to FOM members by the Ministry of Community Development

Japanese docents have a two-decade history of guiding in the National Museum from 1981 when Fumi Nagae became an FOM member. She and eight other women introduced Japanese-speaking tours at the museum in 1982. When the Singapore Art Museum opened in 1996, our docents self-trained in the new exhibitions and began taking Japanese-speaking visitors around the galleries.



Today, there are approximately seventy Japanese docents, one of whom has been guiding for seventeen years! Our tours start at ten-thirty every weekday morning and each docent gives tours twice a month. 1,607 visitors joined these tours in 2002.

About fifteen to twenty new docents come into our group every April and October after taking a three-month training course presented through lectures given by experienced docents and using our own prepared training materials based on notes researched on past exhibits and captions on current exhibitions.



Our docents take turns in translating research notes, captions and information for exhibitions which will run in the museums for three months or longer and for major shorter-term attractions. We translated all the captions for the blockbuster *Fabergé* exhibition

in SAM in 2001 - even though it lasted less than three months. This was the first time the objets d'art, from the Forbes Magazine Collection in New York, the world's largest repository of Romanov Imperial Easter eggs, were presented in Asia and it was high-profile and very popular within the Japanese community.

With the National Museum re-opening in 1991 and the Singapore Art Museum opening in 1996, Japanese docents worked together to translate the new museum wall texts describing the exhibits. For the latest opening, Asian Civilisations Museum Empress Place, we translated the 'ACM A-Z Guide', with each docent being responsible for five pages of translation.

Japanese docents share some similarities with our fellow English-speaking docents. In addition to our regularly scheduled daily museum tours, we also arrange special tours on request and guide pupils from the Japanese school every year. In 2002, some two hundred and fifty students visited the Singapore History Museum to study Singapore history and the principal of the Japanese primary school is proud of this particular educational programme. We also on occasions provide tours for travelling students from Japan.

With their in-depth knowledge of museum exhibitions, some of our docents contribute articles to the Japanese Association's publication 'Southern Cross' and a series of articles about ACM Empress Place started in August 2003.

1988

- Tenth anniversary of Friends of the National Museum, Singapore
- FOM and National Museum implement *Peranakan Heritage* exhibition



- FOM researches and produces 'A Day in the Life of a Nonya' video
- FOM participates in Fort Canning archaeological excavation
- Membership: 600

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1981 Contribute article series in the Japanese Association's magazine
- Oct 1982 Japanese guided tours start with two a month
- Nov 1982 Assist in the Discovery Room once a week
- Jul 1983 Japanese school tours start
- Oct 1984 Japanese tours become once a week
- Apr 1987 *Things Japanese* exhibition opens
- Nov 1987 Assist in National Costume Parade
- Mar 1988 Workshop for handicapped children
- Feb 1990 First Japanese Fair (FOM programme)
- Nov 1990 Assist in *Rice Festival* (National Museum re-opening commemorative programme)
- Apr 1991 Tours at SHM are offered twice a week
- Jan 1994 Tours at SHM are offered every morning, Tuesday - Friday
- Oct 1994 Assist in *Kampong Game* party
- Jun 1996 Tours at SAM are offered every morning, Tuesday - Friday
- Apr 1996 Translate brochure of the *Dioramas* exhibition at SHM
- Dec 1997 Tours at ACM are offered every morning, Tuesday - Friday
All docents guide at SHM, with SAM or ACM as the second option
- Jun 2000 *The Japanese Festival* at ACM (one-day cultural event)

JAPANESE FAIRS

- 1990 Japanese New Year, Doll Festival & Boys' Festival Party, Let's Try Japanese Culture
- 1991 Moon-Viewing & Okonomiyaki, Japanese Pizza
- 1992 Sushi Party
- 1993 Rice Ball with Yukata, Japanese New Year
- 1994 Star Festival, Japanese New Year
- 1995 Making Ornaments for Star Festival
- 1996 Japanese New Year, Doll Festival, Japanese Traditional Playing Cards of One Hundred Famous Poems
- 1997 Traditional Japanese Games
- 1998 The Bon Dance, Traditional Japanese Game, Japanese Food
- 1999 Four Season, Traditional Japanese Game
- 2000 Star Festival & Manners of Chopsticks, Japanese New Year
- 2001 Japanese Culture, Green Tea
- 2002 Washi, Hakata Doll
- 2003 Soybeans, Wrapping



1989

National Museum closed for major renovation

- First FOM mission statement introduced
- FOM researches and produces 'Of Fire and Clay' video for special project on the *Dragon Kiln - San Mui Kuang Pottery Works*
- FOM participates in the Chinatown archaeological excavation

- Introduction of
 - Book discussion group
 - 'Thursday mornings at my house' series discussion group
- First publicity coordinator role established
- Library relocates to Goethe Institut (along with lecture series)



"The museums have been one of the best ways to help us grow culturally. Catch the children at an early age; make sure their first museum experience is enjoyable and full of fun and they will come back again, as adults and as parents with their children. Make our history and exhibitions come alive and visitors, young and old, will keep coming back!"

- Genevieve Peng, Assistant Director-Children's Discovery Gallery, Singapore History Museum

A small World of *Discovery*

The rows of tiny shoes neatly placed on the shoe racks indicate that another group of young students are discovering all types of secrets within the Children's Discovery Gallery located in the Singapore History Museum. A short time earlier these same five to nine year-old girls and boys, dressed smartly in their school uniforms, would have walked two-by-two into this strange new world - full of anticipation, yet shy and coy. A quick glance through the doorway tells how their timid looks have been transformed into open expressions of delight and discovery; the noise makes one wonder if these children could ever have been nervous - they are in an environment created to transport them into another world for two hours.



room! One can only imagine how hot, stuffy and cramped it must have been ... but the teachers loved it. The schools recognised the benefits of the students visiting the museum and gaining knowledge on the topics on display and the students were learning while having fun.

"We were involved with the children's programmes from the earliest days and pioneered the concept of hands-on activities. It was a real learning experience", recalls FOM volunteer Nancy Hawes, who started children's craft programmes. "The first time we held them we had examples of projects and every child reproduced the examples. After several tries we found that showing slides of themes and ideas seemed to work best. I remember one boy who, when we were making houseboats, constructed a Malacca style coffee house with tables and chairs and plants in Chinese bowls."



Today's Children's Discovery Gallery (CDG) evolved from a Young People's Gallery which was created in the early 1980s to exhibit the artwork of students. Local teachers were seconded from schools for up to two years to develop programmes for students and this led to the formation of the Discovery Room - an area located in a small space within the National Museum which was, in reality, the meter



Genevieve Peng, now Assistant Director-Children's Discovery Gallery, recognised the potential and pleaded with the director for more space and there was no turning back.

1990

- FOM participates in special projects for new exhibitions
 - *The Rice Festival*
 - *Our Immigrant Past*
 - *Rites of Passage*



- First Japanese Fair
- Library returns to National Museum

99

The gallery was transformed following the National Museum's major renovation in the early 1990s. Space was specifically dedicated and exhibitions were designed to capture the imagination of younger students. The aim - to ensure that these young visitors appreciated that museums can be fun to visit, to enable them to learn about the contents within the gallery and to ensure that the children would wish to return.



Genevieve and enthusiastic, committed and extremely creative volunteers now plan, build, test and implement a variety of exhibitions. Each exhibition has a lifespan of between three to twelve months - most averaging six. Themes are appropriate to school curricula.

Exhibitions contain a large variety of learning 'tools' - all of which involve and fascinate the students. There are displays of objects which can be touched and used in the organised activities, displays

of photographs and pictures which become points for discussion, games relevant to the subjects of the exhibitions, stories read and songs sung. Sometimes the children dress up, play instruments and create things they can take home to proud families along with the colourful workbooks they complete during their visits to reinforce the key learning points.

Our volunteers come from all walks of life - a mix of Singaporeans (including National Servicemen who volunteer during their free time) and many other nationalities, bringing enormous diversity to the group. It is not long before

all these volunteers become totally dedicated to CDG, the museum and the students. Genevieve describes them as a 'family' and is astounded at the lengths they go to in order to ensure that the exhibitions are successful.

On more than one occasion teams have travelled outside Singapore, at their own cost, to gain in-depth knowledge of a topic, for example to Malacca to learn more about the preparations and celebrations involved in a Peranakan wedding. One volunteer 'volunteered' her husband to take a video camera into villages in India during one of his business trips to capture a Thereukoothu 'street performance' which is no longer seen in Singapore. Historically, our volunteers have supplied objects for the displays: puppets, masks, kites and other objects have been sourced from all over Asia during vacations and holidays abroad specifically for CDG exhibitions.



Once exhibitions have been planned and constructed, the role of the volunteers changes. They learn how to encourage the children to participate in gallery activities and how to support students who might be very shy or even difficult on the day! Our 'teachers' are coached to ensure that the children gain the maximum level of fun and enjoyment while learning. As one volunteer, who has been an integral part of CDG for many years, says, "The whole idea is to have fun and if students learn just one thing it will have made our day."

1991

- Evening lecture series introduced
- Docent refresher training introduced



- 'Worker bees' term introduced for willing ad hoc volunteers
- Introductory lecture series linked to Friday morning lecture series

So, if we had peeped into the gallery over the years what might we have seen? We would have seen children building kites, smelling local spices, wearing ethnic masks, dressing one another in Chinese opera costumes, wearing Chinese operatic make-up, performing on stage, playing a gamelan, creating a Wayang puppet theatre ... and so much more.



What we would not have seen was the knowledge being absorbed - the knowledge secretly stored in each corner of the exhibitions, in each of the activities: the ability to recognise and name star constellations, to understand the development of Singapore's history and cultural roots, to know how to address family members in different ethnic groups, to gain an understanding of the variety of festivals, their meanings and their value to everyone ... and again, so much more.



As this author looked through the exhibition files, through the vast library of photographs, through the details of the activities and the workbooks she felt elated, astounded and in total wonder over the dedication of everyone involved. It is no wonder that schools rush to reserve places for their students as soon as a new exhibition is announced; no surprise that

children bring their families and friends to the gallery following their school visit; and it is a remarkable achievement to all who have supported CDG through the years that nearly 10,000 students and parents were guided by the volunteers during the *When I Was Born* exhibition which ran for twelve months and closed in March 2003.

"My wish for the new Children's Discovery Gallery is to be comparable to any you would find in renowned museums in America, Australia and other countries and for the children to really enjoy the learning opportunity in an interactive, multi-media environment," answered Genevieve when asked about her goals for the future of the gallery following the extensive renovation of SHM which began in 2003 - and then she added that she hoped children would want to return to the museum and take their children to museums in the future.




Surely Genevieve should feel that part of her goal and the goals of the volunteers are already being realised. When a student was recently asked why he had visited CDG on a Saturday, he replied: "I like this exhibition so much, so I have brought my parents - and see, I am the guide."

1992

- Student tours in the National Museum introduced (school tours)
- Docent training committee: formal name given to long-standing training committee
- Introduction of 'Wednesday evenings at my house' series discussion group

- Japanese docents (40) carry out translation project for the National Museum
- Membership: 700



"The first tour I led, to Sri Lanka, was actually thrust upon me at the very last minute. At the end of that 'sink or swim' experience, I came back determined to work toward developing written guidelines for tour leaders as it was evident that there is a lot more to leading a study tour than getting people on and off busses. I am very happy to see how smoothly our tours run now, thanks to the guidance and support given tour leaders prior to the tour."

- Mary Connors, fourteen-year FOM volunteer

Friends on Tour

Following an inaugural meeting in October 1978, study tours were first offered as regular programmes by the Friends of the National Museum in 1979. Within a short time our intrepid members were venturing outside Singapore, first to Malacca but within a year jetting off to Sri Lanka.

Our excited travellers first brought back news of their adventures to their families and friends. It was not long before there was interest from others and special presentations were made to members - in March



1994 a group gave a slide and talk presentation on Bhutan at a lunchtime gathering in the Goodwood Park Hotel. In April 1995 a report from Sue Beckett on Myanmar was the forerunner of the tour reports that now regularly feature in our newsletter.

This sharing of travellers' tales, whether through presentations, in the newsletters or at public lectures, is fundamental to the way in which FOM enlarges our pool of knowledge and makes it available for all.

24 YEARS OF DISCOVERY

1979	Malacca	1993	India, China, Indonesia
1980	Mandalay & Chiang Mai, Sri Lanka	1994	W Sumatra, Bhutan, Cambodia, Spice islands
1981	Malacca	1995	Myanmar, Borobudur (Indonesia), Isan (NE Thailand)
1982	China, Thailand	1996	Central Asia & N Pakistan, S India, Malacca, Cambodia x2
1983	Malaysia, Indonesia	1997	Uzbekistan, Japan, Sarawak, Cambodia, Bali, Malacca, Laos & Thailand
1984	Kuala Lumpur, China, Japan	1998	Kerala, Goa & Bombay, Irian Jaya (Indonesia), Shanghai & Canton, Bhutan x2, Central Java, Taiwan, Malacca, China Silk Road, Cambodia, Beijing
1985	India	1999	Rajasthan, Myanmar, Japan, Lesser Sundas Islands, Laddakh (India), Malacca, Shanghai, Suzhou & Hangzhou, Bhutan, Sarawak, Bangkok
1986	Thailand	2000	Egypt, Rajasthan, N Vietnam, Tibet, Cambodia, Bali
1987	Gandhara (N Pakistan) and China Silk Road	2001	Isan (NE Thailand), Ajantha & Ellora (India), Bhutan, Hong Kong & Macao, Yunnan, Laos, S Sulawesi
1988	India, Malaysia	2002	Nepal, Japan, Turkey, Sarawak
1989	Jogjakarta & Solo (Java)	2003	Kerala (India), Bhutan, Myanmar, Shanghai, N Vietnam, Cambodia
1990	Sulawesi, Sarawak, Vietnam		
1991	Java, Tibet and Nepal, Thailand and Laos, Laos and Cambodia, Nias (Indonesia)		
1992	China		

Turkey, 2002

"It can't get better than this! was the daily cry from thirteen FOM participants. But it did get better. Every day Turkey provided an increasingly rich smorgasbord of ancient and modern history, breathtaking botanical vistas, bizarre geographical sights, peeps into daily village life and culinary delights as the tour progressed through the central and western regions of the country."

Egypt, 2000

"We were lucky to have such a knowledgeable Egyptologist as our guide who almost made the sculptures come to life during our visit to the atmospheric Luxor Museum."

S India, 1996

"It was wonderful. My memories are of excellent research papers read to us on the sea wall at Pondicherry; the story of the Mahabharata in the Nilgiri hills; the Ramayana in front of a roaring log fire in an old colonial hotel in Ooty; hearing about the philosophy of Yoga and then trying a few poses as the sun dropped over the hills leaving us in candlelight and then sitting around a camp fire eating potatoes."

**Tibet, 2000**

"The air is thin, pure and cold: I can't get enough of it. If all you had to do to survive here were to breathe, this place would be a paradise, once you got used to the altitude."

Yunnan, 2001

"One of the more memorable experiences we had in Zhongdion was a visit to a farm. An old monk greeted us enthusiastically at the gate and led us into an open courtyard with flowers growing along one wall. The yaks were stabled on the ground level so we were invited to the family rooms on the second floor."

Cambodia, 2000

"After a day and night in Phnom Penh, we took a short afternoon flight to Siem Reap to be met by our guide Lorm, a remarkable man, 'guide extraordinaire', with a vast knowledge of all things Cambodian, endless patience for all our questions and tolerance with our fluctuating schedule."



Beijing, 1998

"Although I had been to Beijing before, this trip gave me a much wider perspective of the city and its people. When I am very, very old I will have all the wonderful photographs to help me remember."

Myanmar, 2003

"The highlight for many in the group was an early morning balloon ride over the archaeological field of Bagan. Gliding silently over the temples and watching the Burmese go about their daily morning rituals was a gift from the gods."

Thailand, 1995

"Before leaving, we spent an evening with an unusual man who added a lot to the homework we had already done - Pira Sudham, author of 'Monsoon Country'. This Nobel Prize nominee shared with us his love for the Isan people and opened the door to his native village, Napo in Buriram province."

Bangkok, 1999

"From palaces to temples, barge trips on the river to Thai dancing, we tried to see and do everything. We were fortunate having Diane Reitman as our leader. She had lived in Thailand and shared much of her local lore with us, as well as some of her favourite restaurants. We ate like gourmets and enjoyed every minute of it."

Sulawesi, 2001

"Our very knowledgeable and helpful guide, who initially had to overcome the shock of having to accompany sixteen ladies, liked us so much that he gave each of us a book written by a friend on the meaning of Toraja carvings as a farewell gift."

**Japan, 2002**

"Famed architect Yoshihiro Takishita talked to us about the minka style houses of Japan. To save two of these eighteenth-century houses thirty-five years ago, he dismantled them and transported them piece by piece to a commanding position high on a hill in Kamakura overlooking Sagami Bay."

N Vietnam, 2000

"I could not help but be touched by the many encounters I had such as learning to plant rice from a Zai woman dressed so colourfully in her bright green and pink blouse. She was so willing to teach, however shy she was and however silly she must have thought this foreigner to be."

Sarawak, 1997

"Our final visit was to the Astana, built by Charles Brooke for the Rane's arrival in 1870 and now the residence of the Governor, the Head of State. Permission to visit had to be specially obtained as it is not a tourist spot."

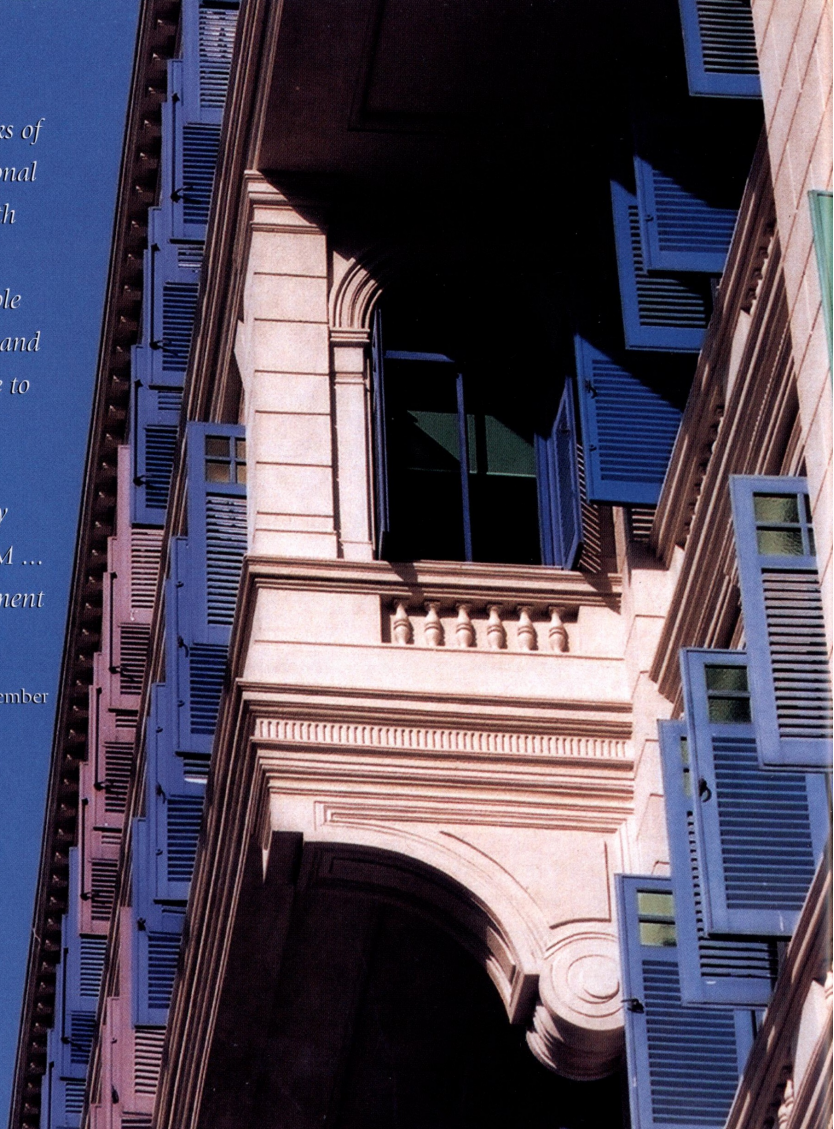
Malacca, 1996

"During the evening, a Peranakan gentleman Mr Charles K Chua entertained us in his home and fascinated us with his family's history. Mrs Chua had spent many hours preparing a Tok Panjang - a ceremonial long table with Nonya dishes full of exquisite subtle flavours."



"My memories of the first few weeks of organising the Friends of the National Museum are the ones that stick with me most. One of the best things to come out of it was the interest people had in learning something new ... and going on with their new knowledge to create interesting careers based on Asian art: doctorates, books, ocean excavations etc. It was a very heady time ... we lived and breathed FOM ... each new day brought some excitement or new hurdle."

- Anne Tofield, FOM founder member



New Directions

"The world is your exercise-book, the pages on which you do your sums. It is not reality, although you can express reality there if you wish. You are also free to write nonsense, or lies, or to tear the pages."

'Illusions: The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah',
Richard Bach

Life is a journey of discovery for anyone who ventures onto the untrodden path ahead. For many members of the Friends of the National Museum, participation and involvement in the organisation have created new journeys of professional growth and personal fulfilment. Here there is only space to mention a few but they are representative of many, many more.

Low Sze Wee, 33, began his career as a lawyer in 1996. At the same time, due to his personal interests in the visual arts, he also joined the pioneer batch of trainees for the weekend docent training programme. To Sze Wee, this was an excellent opportunity to learn more about art as well as to work closely with the newly opened Singapore Art Museum.

"I gained a lot through the docent training programme: learning about Singapore and her artists and meeting many new like-minded friends who share similar interests. On a personal level, the experiences also opened



my eyes to career options that were available in the art community."

Sze Wee continues: "While I enjoyed my two years of litigation work and working with my colleagues in the law firm, I also felt a gnawing sense of lack of job satisfaction. Being an idealist, I felt that if I were to spend the next thirty years of my life at work, it was important that I do something that I enjoy so that work does not become too much of a chore. The

more I interacted with fellow lawyers, and also curators who crossed my path in my docent activities, I began to see a stark difference between the two circles of professionals. The lawyers holding prestigious jobs were well paid - yet, many were not happy with what they were doing. Many of them seemed to have a deep desire to do something else, but the question was always 'what'?

"On the other hand, the professionals whom I met in the art circles, especially the curators, may not have been as highly paid, despite highly demanding and stressful jobs. Yet, I observed that they enjoyed what they did and were imbued with a strong sense of fulfilment. I began to understand that they created their own success and happiness by choosing to journey along a path that they believed in and had a passion in. With this new insight gained, I began to seriously consider a career change."



1993 1993 1993 1993 1993 1993 1993 1993 1993 1993 1993 1993 1993 1993 1993

1993

Formation of the National Heritage Board Children's Discovery Gallery created: quarterly exhibitions are planned, created and guided by FOM volunteers

- FOM donates *Qing Dynasty ink stone* to the National Museum



- FOM assists with the cataloguing of National Museum's art collection
- FOM participates in research for new exhibition, *Singapore Cultural Mosaic - the Bohras and Khojas*
- Japanese tours increase to two per week
- Library moves to 'Container 1' - National Library car park

After much thinking, Sze Wee took that first step towards new adventures in his life. He left the legal profession to pursue a Masters degree in Art History at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London and returned to Singapore with new knowledge and confidence as he assumed a new curatorial career.

Sze Wee is currently working at the Singapore Art Museum and recently curated the popular *20th Century Chinese Paintings in Singapore Collections* exhibition at SAM and also Singapore's entry into the 2003 Venice Biennale.



"I appreciated the high standards demanded by FOM and felt these helped me to 'keep my edge' while job hunting. I settled much more quickly in Singapore because its programmes introduced me to the interesting varieties of life and culture beneath the city's surface. Through the friends I made, I learned of other organisations such as AWARE and the ANZA writers' group," says Rebecca.

A significant achievement for Rebecca was the publication of 'In the Shadow of the Merlion' and 'Not all Pink Gins', two collections of stories that were inspired by the experiences of members of the ANZA writers' group when they were all new to Singapore.

Nancy Hawes, a former FOM president, went on to build a new and distinguished career when she returned to the United States thanks to her experiences in Singapore. After gaining a Masters degree in Museum Education, she has worked for the Asia Society for many years, heading up their Houston office. This Society is one of the most influential organisations in the United States in the field of educating Americans about Asia, in matters of policy as well as art.

"My experience at the National Museum in education, cataloguing, docenting and lecturing led me to do my degree and then to my new job where I draw on all those skills," she says. "And it gave me the dedication to teach Americans about Asia and an understanding of how important this knowledge is in our shrinking world."



While FOM continues to reshape the lives of some Singaporean members, people of other nationalities have also seen their lives here transformed.

Rebecca Poston arrived in Singapore in 1992. As a newcomer, she found it difficult to find employment upon arrival. It was a chance attendance at an FOM Monday morning lecture that led to new opportunities in Rebecca's life. She began to lead study groups and

soon gave lectures herself on Monday mornings. Through her years of volunteering, Rebecca has chaired the projection (now presentation) committee and also coordinated both the Monday morning and Friday evening lecture series.

1994 1994 1994 1994 1994 1994 1994 1994 1994 1994 1994 1994 1994 1994 1994

1994

- First graphics appear in newsletter
- Discovering Singapore series replaces 'Thursday mornings at my house'



- Children's Discovery Gallery reintroduces regular holiday workshops
- Membership: **900**
- Library moves from 'Container 1' to 'Container F'



Other current and former FOM members have also found that their research, travel and discoveries while exploring the peoples and cultures of Singapore and nearby Southeast Asian countries have resulted in the publication of several books. Mary Connors ('Lao Textiles and Traditions'), Alice Yen Ho ('Old Kuching', 'At the South-East Asian Table'), Sarnia Hayes Hoyt ('Old Penang', 'Old Malacca'), Maya Jayapal ('Old Singapore'), Maura Rinaldi ('Kraak Porcelain: A Moment in the History of Trade') - to name just a few.

FOM members who have changed directions in their lives as a result of their experiences within the organisation have reaped the rewards of the experiences themselves. Eyes and senses have been opened in areas where the individuals had not imagined they would find such all-consuming interests. This has led to ongoing study, in some cases the establishment of wonderful private collections of artworks,

textiles and craftwork and in some instances the creation of related enterprises.

FOM has also provided the opportunity for many of our artistically talented members to exhibit their own work to the public through our Art Shows arranged in National Heritage Board museums. At the end of 2003 a Photographic Show will display the abilities of several of our creative photographers - one of whom was responsible for the magnificent full-page illustrations in this book.

Members frequently share how astounded they are to find that their lives have been influenced so positively by taking, what at first seemed, a simple step - joining a group to discover a little about the culture and arts of the region and to make a few friends with like-minded interests.

An unexplored career path, an exploration of unfamiliar culture and environment ... FOM presents a new world of volunteerism, endless learning, new friends and fresh opportunities that are boundless.

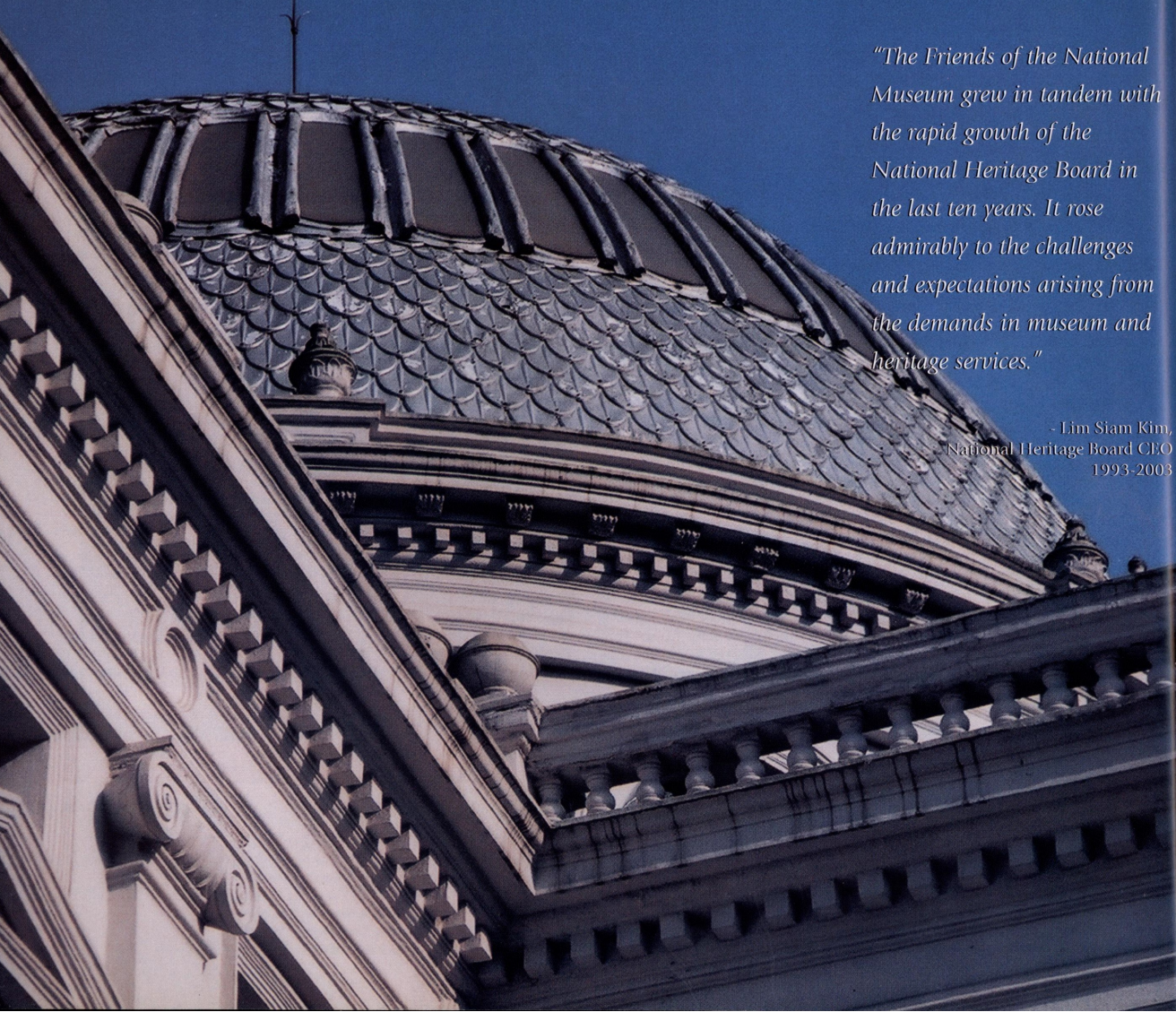


1995

Official opening of Singapore History Museum (SHM)

- Visitors guided by English-speaking docents
 - 1,000 on regular tours
 - 4,000 on student tours
 - 127 special tours
- Introduction of Monday morning lecture series (replacing Friday mornings)
- Introduction of mini-study groups for beginners

- First Singapore Art Museum docent training course
- FOM donates two works of art to SAM: 'Sunset' by Dr Jolly Koh Cheng Whatt and 'Tree of Life' by Brother Joseph McNally
- NHB presents 'Certificates of Appreciation' to docents for the first time



"The Friends of the National Museum grew in tandem with the rapid growth of the National Heritage Board in the last ten years. It rose admirably to the challenges and expectations arising from the demands in museum and heritage services."

- Lim Siam Kim,
National Heritage Board CEO
1993-2003

Reaching Out to the Wider Community

On your last visit to one of the museums, you may have spotted a hopeful-looking person waiting patiently in the lobby. This person is neither a visitor nor a museum staff member; he or she is a Friends of the National Museum docent, who is more than happy to show you around the exhibitions for free. You might also have caught sight of parents with their children edging towards a colourful space in the Children's Discovery Gallery or Ace Space, where they would be welcomed by a group of friendly volunteers.

Docent guiding and children's programmes are two areas in which FOM introduces the public to the museums. There are, however, many other projects in which we make an organised effort to involve ourselves, to reach out to the larger Singaporean community. In this article we only offer a quick glimpse of what we have achieved in our contributions to the community and to the public in the past twenty-five years.

From our earliest years FOM, although primarily occupied with establishing and running study groups and members' programmes,



presenting lectures, working with the museum's education services at the Discovery Gallery and supporting the museum's exhibitions and similar initiatives, has also centred on engaging more sectors of the population in Singapore's heritage and arts.

There are many examples of such projects in the 1980s. Adjustments were made to the children's workshops to cater to the needs of disabled children - in order to help them discover the artist in themselves. Our volunteers coordinated a series of monthly art demonstrations, initiated by the National Museum, to

acquaint the public with local artists. Volunteers also supported the museum's audio-visual project for schools in 1984 in the form of a *History of Singapore* gallery. As part of the National Museum's centennial celebrations in 1987, we put together a children's activity book aptly entitled 'Magical Museum Tour' to entertain young visitors. The following year, we produced a video entitled 'A Day in the Life of a Nonya' for an exhibition on Peranakan heritage which made the public's museum experience a more interactive one.

1980 1981 1982 1983 1984 1985 1986 1987 1988 1989 1990 1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000

1996

Official opening of Singapore Art Museum (SAM)

- First regular 'Message from the President' appears in the newsletter
- Formation of the members' programmes committee



- Japanese docents translate *Dioramas* brochure for SHM
- Membership: 850

The 1990s saw an expansion in the scope of FOM activities. In the mid-nineties, we collaborated with the Ministry of Education and the National Heritage Board to develop three heritage trails to help students to better appreciate the nation's history, culture and diversity in a more proactive way. Armed with these informative activity books and maps, students and teachers could explore three heritage districts to learn about them on their own.

In 1999, FOM ran a series of workshops to train student representatives to become qualified museum guides for their schools. One of our members who volunteered to conduct the sessions, Liesel Strauss, found that the preparations involved more work than a docent's usual routine "because these were students who came for serious learning." However, what carried the day for Liesel was her satisfaction that she was able to help students take the first step to becoming guides themselves, so that they could eventually interest their schoolmates in the museums.

What is remarkable about these contributions is not their quantity but what they reveal about us. In each assignment, FOM volunteers go the extra mile to get things done well. Tan Chee Koon, Executive Director of the National Volunteer Centre, recalls how much effort our members put into their work. "They went beyond guiding. They also took part in the planning and setting up of the exhibits. A lot of research went into the set up. There is commitment and sometimes a volunteer would do up the exhibit out of her own pocket. I remember when a volunteer went so far as to go to Kelantan to buy some of the props for the kite exhibition."

We also stand out as volunteers because we have taken volunteerism a step further in terms of the professionalism we bring to all we do. We bring with us a maturity, precision and thoroughness cultivated from networking and the learning opportunities we receive at FOM.

Members who have volunteered for Dr John Miksic's archaeological excavations since 1987, for instance, surprised him with their seriousness and enthusiasm. He was impressed with the fact that they "understood archaeology wasn't about expecting to find something exciting everyday. Using the proper methodology becomes the goal". Unlike most volunteer activities, archaeological volunteers need to accept this philosophy. Volunteers realised that this was the attitude that they had to assume at the dig through regular networking - a staple feature of FOM.



Being able to take this attitude on board means we are able to painstakingly carry out the routine work that sometimes leads to important finds. This

happened in 1987 when an extraordinary discovery of hundreds of tiny glass beads was made on Fort Canning Hill, which has since shed new light on Singapore's distant past. According to Dr Miksic, "We don't have any historical record about the beads in the context of Singapore ... in the first round of sifting through the soil samples we hadn't even seen them, although they must have been there all along. They were only discovered when the soil was washed and forced through the wire mesh - and FOM volunteers were doing this. I think this was a very important find."

1997

- Official opening of Asian Civilisations Museum Armenian Street (ACM)
- Current mission statement compiled
- FOM participates in Empress Place archaeological excavation

- Formation of research committee
- FOM researches 'Heritage Tour of Singapore' for NHB and MIE
- Membership: 1200




At this point, looking over these outstanding qualities, one might wonder, what motivates these volunteers? For Sue Williams, who hopes her research on the Bidadari cemetery will bring out a little known aspect of Singapore's social history and prove to be an aide-mémoire for future generations of Singaporeans, it is generally a belief and passion for what she is doing: "I am a strong believer in the fact that a people must have a knowledge and respect for its past to live the present and prepare for the future."

Reflecting on her many years of service with FOM, from an ordinary member to international delegate, Julia Oh believes that while she may have given much to FOM and the museums in Singapore, she has also received much in return. "At the age of fifty-six, my universe is still opening up as I attend meetings around the world and have even prepared and given a lecture at a symposium in Spain on issues to do with volunteering in museums."

1998

- Friends of the National Museum, Singapore celebrates twentieth anniversary
- MITA 'Award of Appreciation' presented to the Friends of the National Museum
- Friends of the National Museum, Singapore elected to represent associate members on the council of WFFM (1998-2005)

- FOM logo revised
- First web site pages created
- Administrative/fiscal year changes to 1 October - 30 September
- New format newsletter

A large, red, glossy Chinese lion statue (shishi) is the central focus, perched on a decorative pedestal. The lion is depicted in a powerful, seated pose, facing right with its mouth open, showing its tongue and teeth. It has a white collar with a circular ornament. The background is filled with lush green leaves and branches, some of which are in the foreground, partially obscuring the lion. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

"The week-long congress in Sydney and these two regional meetings were an inspiring example of the World Federation in action. The sharing of our experiences gave many of us a new and happy realisation that we have Friends around the world. It was a special pleasure for me to come to Singapore, talk with Margaret (White) and Kay (Anand-Sobti) again and relive the fun of the congress. I made many new friends and began to understand that each individual Friend gives something special of themselves to Singapore's museums in a wonderful kind of mini-world Federation of Friends."

- Carol Serventy, WFFM Vice President for Africa-Asia-Pacific

International *Connections*

The international movement to create bodies of supporters for museums is by no means recent. One of the world's first Friends' groups was the Ballarat Fine Arts Society Public Gallery Association formed in Victoria, Australia in 1884 and we can now count many millions of people for whom it is an important expression of citizen involvement as they promote and support the establishment and the running of museums globally.



Director and she recruited three other pioneers: Anne Toffield, Sally Haussman and Fran Hamlin ... They in turn contacted their friends and neighbours including Pheng Tan (still a volunteer on the Advisory committee) ... FOM had been launched.

From the start, one of the greatest strengths of the Friends of the National Museum, Singapore has been our international scope, both in the composition of our membership and in our ability to draw on contacts from around the world. FOM has always attracted people with two key strengths: the wish to contribute their volunteer services to the community and to learn; and the desire to disseminate knowledge about Singapore and Southeast Asia's history, culture and art

IMPORTING EXPERTISE

Wynne Spiegel, who arrived in Singapore with her husband in 1978 for what turned out to be a stay of just three months, approached the Singapore National Museum to offer her volunteer services when she discovered there were no public tours as she had been a docent guide in the United States. Her proposal was accepted by the Museum

established five years previously and which has kept in close contact with us over the years. In that first year, FOM provided the Singapore National Museum with its first guided tours, a lecture series and also organised and ran a workshop for three hundred and fifty schoolchildren. Eng-Lee Seok Chee, senior curator who was then chief liaison with FOM, recalls: "At that time we had a very small staff and we were happy to encourage FOM to start and run programmes." Our first five years saw the establishment of the majority of our core programmes, which continue to run most successfully today.



1999 1999 1999 1999 1999 1999 1999 1999 1999 1999 1999 1999 1999 1999 1999



1999

- Introduction of members' programmes in current format
- Collectors' forum introduced
- Representation at 10th congress of WFFM in Sydney, Australia

- FOM volunteers support the National Archives
- Formation of MAD - Museums and Docents in touch
- Membership: **1300**

EXPORTING EXPERTISE

Many FOM members have only lived in Singapore for two or three years, a relatively short time, but the knowledge which they gained here has led in some instances to international acclaim through their own professional careers and activities.



Some have taken the FOM concept to other parts of the world. Nancy LeBaron revitalised the volunteer group for Kew Gardens in London and June Davey and others took the principles of the docent training programme to Hong Kong as well as to other museum locations. It is interesting that some of these 'exports' return - for instance a

number of our docents were first trained in Hong Kong and, since transferring to Singapore, have taken up key roles within our group.

ENLARGING HORIZONS

FOM in Singapore does not exist in a vacuum but is a member of the World Federation of Friends of Museums. This international organisation with federations and associations of Friends in over thirty countries represents more than two million volunteers supporting museums. WFFM was first mooted in 1967 and officially established with its first international congress in 1972. Its objectives are to encourage and support the setting up of Friends' groups and to facilitate the exchange of information between groups, through yearly council meetings and general assemblies and triennial congresses. In 1985 FOM joined

WFFM as an associate member and has continually benefited from the opportunities to learn from other Friends' groups around the world.

In 1999 a shift was made from being passive recipients of information to a more active role on the international scene, particularly under the leadership of Margaret White and Kay Anand-Sobti during their terms as presidents. They attended the 10th WFFM world congress held in Sydney where Margaret presented a paper on 'New Friends: New Future' and Kay made contact with Syed Mohamad Albukhary, director of the Islamic Arts Museum in Kuala Lumpur. Inspired by the congress it was decided to hold a meeting of *Friends across Asia* in Kuala Lumpur in 2000, jointly organised by Singapore and Malaysia. Delegates from Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam attended.

This proved to be an exciting start to our efforts to do more in Asia and gave us the opportunity to network not only with museum volunteers throughout the region but also to strengthen our ties with our colleagues in the National Heritage Board and other museum professionals. As we shared our challenges and our successes we learned to value our individual strengths.

The success of this meeting led to a second, 'Sharing the Spirit', in Singapore in 2001 - significantly the 'International Year of the Volunteer'. Keynote speeches, breakout workshops and informal social events ensured once more that those who came benefited immensely. On both occasions WFFM Vice President for Africa-Asia-Pacific, Carol Serventy came to give us the global perspective and she inspired us with her words.

Plans are currently in place for the next regional meeting to be held in 2004.

2000

- Opening of Heritage Conservation Centre (HCC)
- Representation at WFFM meeting in Prague
- First regional Friends' meeting, initiated by FOM and jointly organised with the Islamic Arts Museum, Kuala Lumpur
- MTA presents two FOM members with 'Special Recognition' awards

- FOM participates in guiding of the National Archives
- Introduction of 'Dear Friends' letter from the president in the newsletter
- FOM assists in the design of guided programme of HCC and guides first visitors and special guests



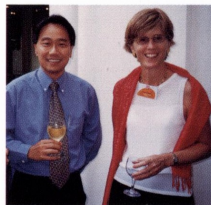
In 1998 we were elected to the council of WFFM for a six-year term to represent associate members. Council meetings are held in a different venue each year and since 2000 Julia Oh, FOM Past President and Advisor, has attended meetings in Prague, Oporto, Bruges and Oslo as our delegate. Other Singapore members have joined the programmes organised for the meetings as well as the WFFM congress in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 2002. In 2002 the council elected Julia as WFFM Secretary General for a three-year term, with responsibility to coordinate and communicate with the global membership.

This opportunity to act on a much wider scale has had many benefits, not only in raising our profile internationally but also in contributing significantly to strengthening WFFM and encouraging growth of Friends'

groups. Closer ties have been established with our colleagues in the museum world through regular reporting sessions to ICOM, the International Committee of Museums.

THE FUTURE

We now have a significant role in a world-wide body. We have a membership with representatives from forty countries and we should be proud of our achievements and our influence as pathfinders and contributors to community service in Singapore and the world. Our growth in the past twenty-five years has been significant. We are now building on the opportunity to explore the many international avenues which are opening to us and continue to promote the work of Friends in support of museums.



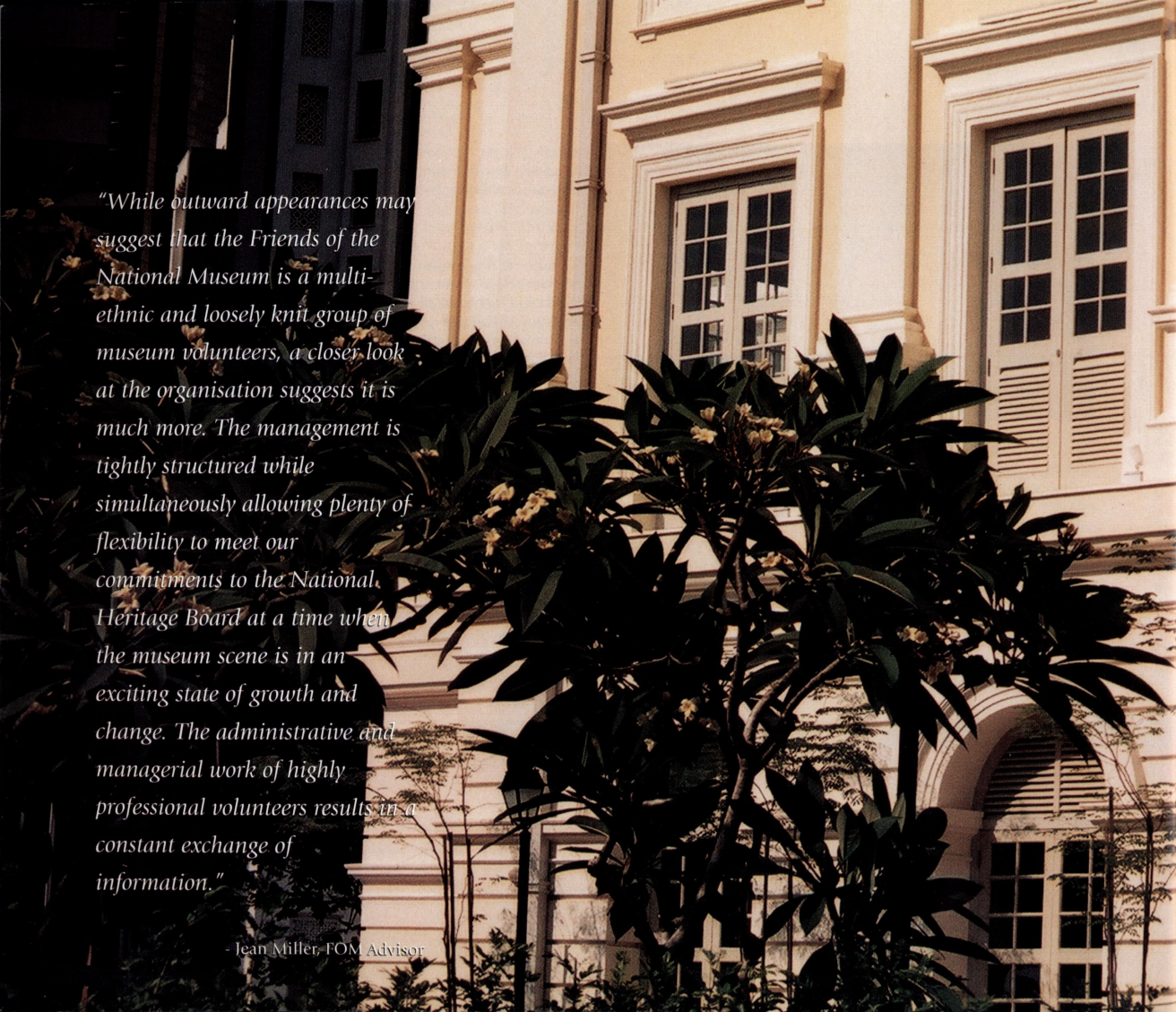
2001

Year of the Volunteer

- Singapore hosts regional Friends' Southeast Asia conference *Friends Across Asia*
- Representation at WFFM meeting in Oporto, Portugal



- FOM participates in Colombo site archaeological excavation
- First *Friends' Art Show* held in SAM
- Friday evening lectures reintroduced



"While outward appearances may suggest that the Friends of the National Museum is a multi-ethnic and loosely knit group of museum volunteers, a closer look at the organisation suggests it is much more. The management is tightly structured while simultaneously allowing plenty of flexibility to meet our commitments to the National Heritage Board at a time when the museum scene is in an exciting state of growth and change. The administrative and managerial work of highly professional volunteers results in a constant exchange of information."

- Jean Miller, FOM Advisor

Behind the *President's Chair*

Tremendous contributions are made by many people to the management and smooth running of the Friends of the National Museum. Over the years our organisation has grown and formalised into a structure of committees manned by people who willingly give their time and expertise for free. We have no paid employees and receive no subsidies or grants.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

With an organisation subject to frequent change as old members move away and new ones join, there is a real need for a body to provide continuity and act as a resource for the organisation. This group, composed of the current president, vice president and past presidents, meets monthly. They monitor policies and procedures, approve new policies or revisions, oversee strategic planning and provide a forum for regular meetings with National Heritage Board representatives to allow for timely reporting and problem-solving.



STEERING COMMITTEE

The president is chairman of the Steering committee and, with the vice president, responsible for coordination, leadership, liaison and monitoring the day-to-day running of FOM. This group meets monthly to exchange information and ideas, ask questions and, with its mix of nationalities, is very much a snapshot of the wider organisation. Members normally serve for a term of twelve months unless the skills required cannot easily be replaced. In such cases, individual members may stay on for a further term or until a replacement is found. Membership of the committee consists of coordinators of our various groups and heads of the administrative functions - up to twenty in total.



2002

Ace-Space launched in ACM

- Opening of first FOM office at 51 Armenian Street
- Representation at WFFM congress in Argentina
- Second *Friends' Art Show* held in Empress Place

- Saturday members' programmes introduced
- Library finds permanent home in 51 Armenian Street!

ADMINISTRATION

Membership is our key revenue generator and membership secretaries collect fees and provide accurate record keeping of the membership roster. They also provide the Advisory and Steering committees with up-to-date membership lists, run off labels each month for the FOM newsletter and undertake all responsibilities associated with enrolling new members.

The newsletter team produces a monthly newsletter for the membership on FOM and museum activities, ensuring that all the information, provided by FOM committees and museums, is received by the deadline, editing its content, preparing the layout and then arranging for publication.

The office coordinator liaises and maintains communication among the office managers and oversees all activities/tasks related to the smooth running of the FOM office. This entire team of volunteers came out of nowhere in 2002 to become a well organised and essential support group within a few months.

The secretary to the president assists the president by administering Advisory meetings, taking and distributing minutes, looking after correspondence, keeping contact lists up-to-date, booking venues and organising VIP lunches as well as other key support activities.

The secretary to the Steering committee administers Steering committee meetings as well as taking minutes and distributing them to all Steering and Advisory committee members.

The treasurer provides responsible accounting of all monies in the FOM treasury, oversees the use of funds, prepares FOM records and receipts for the annual audit and advises the president on matters of fiscal policy and prudence.

The warm and visible face of FOM, the welcoming team, meets and greets participants at all FOM functions whether lectures, social events or Friends' Art Shows and tour presentations.

The newly created role of IT coordinator supports the development of new technology and acts as a consultant to the committees.

MARKETING

FOM marketing activities aim to raise our image as a volunteer organisation at a national level and in the wider community with the objective of attracting new members and expanding the ways in which we contribute to the museums and the overall cultural scene in Singapore. A marketing coordinator provides strategic direction for publicity, web site, design and outreach teams

The publicity team provides information on FOM within the local and foreign communities to attract new members and candidates for docent training and to publicise those activities that are open to non-members. The web site team is responsible for the design and content of our web site.

GUIDING AND TRAINING

Children's Discovery Gallery volunteers cater for the CDG school programmes and public visits. Most members volunteer once a week and a minimum commitment of twice a month is expected. The CDG chairman liaises and maintains communication among the volunteers, Steering committee, CDG planning committee, CDG management team and Singapore History Museum education officers and oversees all activities of the volunteers.

English-speaking docents undergo comprehensive and ongoing training to become knowledgeable guides and give free tours every day to visitors within the museums, including student and VIP groups. The coordinator oversees all activities relating to the docent programme, including all work done by subcommittees such as scheduling of tours and training. With the help of the docent coordinator, the training coordinator assembles teams to train new docents each year.

The Japanese docents provide free guided museum tours for the Japanese-speaking public. At the same time they arrange activities to introduce FOM members to Japanese culture and customs and translate research notes, wall text and information for new exhibits.

2003

Official Opening of Asian Civilisations Museum Empress Place
Singapore History Museum closes for three years
for major expansion

Temporary Singapore History Museum opens in Riverside Point

- Registration of FOM planned
- Representation at WFFM council meeting and AGM in Oslo, Norway

- FOM volunteers support SAM Art Lab
- Participation in NVC National Volunteers Survey
- New web site launched
- New roles established in marketing and IT
- Explore Singapore - new name for members' programmes
- Membership: 1300

EXPLORE SINGAPORE

Explore Singapore activities (formerly members' programmes) are designed to reinforce and expand on other areas of involvement of FOM such as lectures, study groups, museum exhibitions and study tours. The programmes are developed and run by a team and include outings focused on Singapore's historic districts, museums and other places of interest, seminars held over several mornings and special social events.



docent groups, study groups, book groups and study tour participants. The library coordinator is responsible for scheduling the volunteers who staff the library and for overseeing the different functions required to ensure its smooth running.

The presentation (formerly projection) team is responsible for the visual aspects of our public lectures. These volunteers also offer their expertise to train the docent training teams and study group participants on the various technologies involved and support visual presentations at special events when required.

LECTURES

The lecture coordinator arranges free public lectures in the museums on Asian art, culture and history not just for FOM members but for the entire Singapore community on Monday mornings and Friday evenings. These popular lectures are well received both within and outside of FOM and the museum community. An FOM coordinator seeks out suitable topics and speakers, rehearses the lecturers and arranges for publicity.



EDUCATION AND RESOURCES

Book discussion groups enable members to learn about Asia in an informal setting on a monthly basis. All the groups are overseen by a coordinator who organises new groups, chooses a leader for each group, helps enrol participants and coordinates the sharing of information among the groups

The library team provides members with books, magazines, slides and video tapes and a pleasant environment in which to study and browse. The library also houses research materials that can be used by

Study groups provide members with the opportunity for learning in a friendly atmosphere among people with similar interests. The number of groups varies and each is led by one or two volunteers who help select topics and guide the research and discussion. Participants work towards preparing an illustrated talk that may develop into one of our public lectures.

The main goal of the study tours' committee is to offer a wide range of travel throughout Asia in order to expand our members' understanding of the cultures of the countries around them. An attempt is made to have the trips coincide with study group topics, important art shows or other areas of interest within FOM and the museums. Each tour is organised by a volunteer leader who recruits participants and introduces them to the history and culture of the area to be visited before they depart.



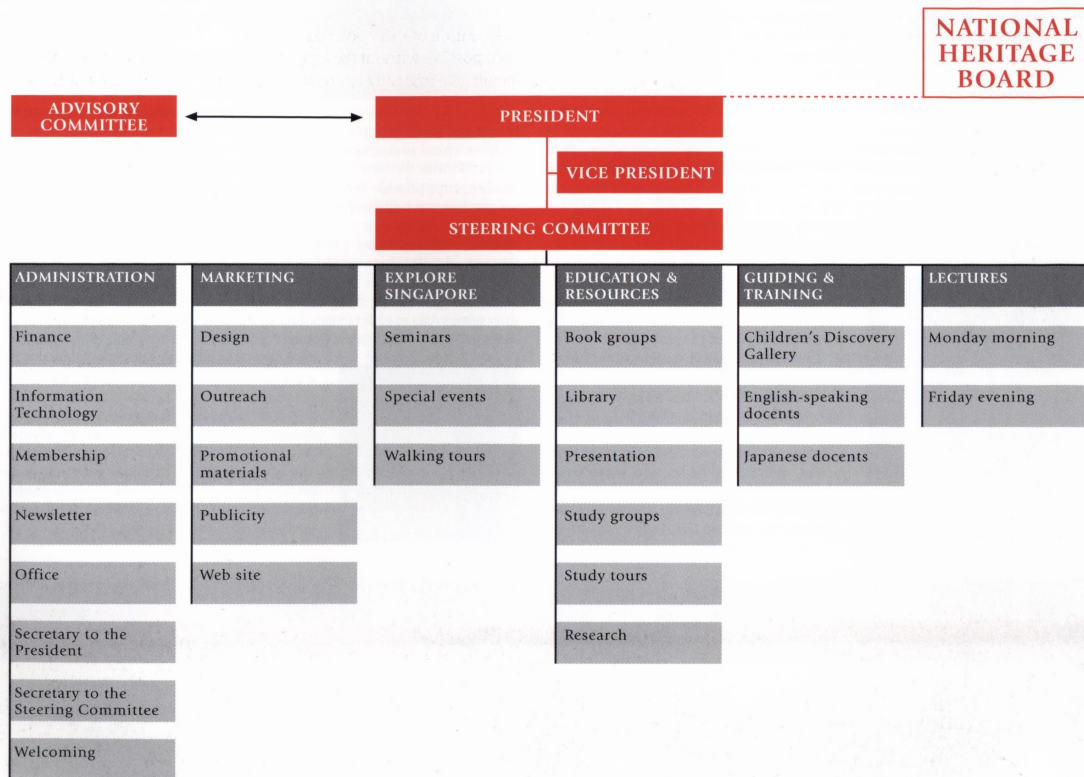
The research group provides research material primarily for use by docents in their guiding at the museums but also for other FOM activities and projects.



THE FRIENDS
OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM
SINGAPORE

25th Anniversary

FOM Organisation Chart



Thank You Sponsors!

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The creation of this book was very much a team effort and would not have been possible without the support and helping hands of a great many FOM members. We greatly appreciate all their contributions, in particular:

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SPECIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

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Our gratitude is expressed to all the FOM members who generously shared their experiences, anecdotes and private photographic collections.

Also we make special acknowledgement of our friends outside FOM who were kind enough to be interviewed and especially to those who provided attributed and non-attributed quotations.

Last but not least, our thanks go to Equity Communications for their creativity, flexibility and ready cooperation throughout the whole project from concept through to publication.

PUBLISHER

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ISBN 981 04 9270 7

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"In the account books of many nations and societies, the contributions of volunteers are recorded with invisible ink. They don't show up, but if they did, the numbers would be impressive indeed! So many essential services and so many events would not happen if it were not for volunteers."

- Anonymous volunteer at the 2000 Sydney Olympics

Quoted in The Friends newsletter by Holly Nash, *President* (2000)

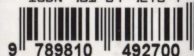


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ISBN 961-04-9270-7



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